

29 October 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM : NIO/USSR-EE

SUBJECT : Waterman's Memo on Reactive Analysis

1. I kept silent during yesterday's discussion, in part because I did not want to poison my relations with my colleagues. Nevertheless, my principal reaction to Charlie's memo is shock and dismay that it was necessary. I apparently have been laboring under the benighted view that the purpose of estimates was to look ahead and not only to describe potential developments in various situations but also to try and anticipate such developments on behalf of the policymaker. I can assure you that if the NIC does not do this task no one else will.

2. Let me respond to some of the specific comments that were made in the meeting:

- Coordination: The outcome of the meeting was about right. Some of these anticipatory papers can be coordinated and should be. Others should simply be in the form of memos to the Director with a recommendation from you that they be distributed to members of the National Security Council or National Security Planning Group. Such typescript memos are more likely to be read in any event than anything that is published. There may be cases where coordination is attempted but where it will become clear that coordination will destroy the coherence of the paper. In these cases coordination should be abandoned and the paper should be presented to the Director as an NIO essay.
- Risk of Leaks: Just because leaks are a fact of life in Washington does not mean that intelligence should stop doing its job because we are afraid of leaks. Where a subject is particularly sensitive, that is a case in favor of very limited coordination or no coordination at all with very limited circulation of any resulting paper. Extreme political sensitivity is, in my judgment, a good basis for not coordinating a paper but providing it to the Director for his further action.

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- NIO Workload: I perhaps am more sensitive to the workload on NIOs than any of my colleagues. Nevertheless, I am unaware that any of them are endangering their health because of overwork at this point. Part of the problem of overwork is that some of my colleagues insist on making major productions out of relatively simple enterprises. As Chairman of the NIC, I do not believe you should hesitate to press the NIOs for the production of such papers. Indeed, I believe the NIC should be cranking out papers like this frequently. (In terms of workload, you may be interested to know that when I was NIO last winter I did a review of production of the NIO/USSR office under my two predecessors. I found that in a period of seven years, exactly eleven interagency products had been produced. I do not think that the taxpayer would find that cost effective.)
- Speculation: There was some comment at the meeting about the fact that such memos would be speculative. Obviously they will be speculative. One of the problems in my view with the intelligence that CIA in particular has been producing in recent years is that it is not speculative enough. Our analysts insist on waiting until they have enough data, when the senior managers should realize there will never be enough data. At some point, somebody needs to sit down and provide the policymaker with a well informed estimate of what may happen. While it will be speculative, it will almost certainly be better informed speculation than he will obtain anywhere else in town. And, while we continue to collect data, policymakers will still have to make decisions with or without our information and estimate.


3. Several of the NIOs have come to me in the last week or two complaining about their relationship with the DCI and that they do not see him enough or feel that they are his senior representatives. I believe to a considerable extent that this situation is the fault of the NIOs themselves and of the NIC. I regard the NIOs as the Director's senior substantive advisers in their given area of expertise. Nevertheless, the Director almost never receives memos from the individual NIOs giving him their thoughts on developing events and policy issues. In the past this was done periodically by Bob Ames and now is being done to a lesser extent by Charlie Waterman. For all of his other problems, this is an area where Constantine does make an impact. And it is not by accident that the Director calls on Constantine and asks to meet with him. It is precisely because he has something from Constantine that he would like to comment on or respond to. My candid view is that the NIOs are becoming as bureaucratic as NFAC and their failure to take advantage of their unique relationship with the DCI is more of a commentary on them and their timidity than it is on the DCI. Most DCIs, and this one in particular, when pressed for time call upon people with whom they have developed some sort of personal relationship. This is clearly the case with both Constantine and Charlie. If the NIOs want to be the center of the DCI's world in their area, they need to get off their behinds, start communicating with him on specific issues as well as on massive interagency tomes, get well plugged in to the DDO and other collectors, and start acting like his principal substantive advisers. They need to understand that this is a role to be earned; not one guaranteed by title or bureaucratic position.

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4. Pardon my intemperance on these issues, but major aspects of the discussion yesterday touched my "go" button because I think they are representative of some of the serious problems in the NIC right now. From the vantage point 100 yards up the seventh floor corridor, the NIC does not give the appearance of a place of vitality, energy, creativity and aggressiveness. Until it does, both individually and collectively, it will not play the role that you or the DCI intend for it.


Robert M. Gates

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